



**THEATREWORKS LAUNCHES 40th ANNIVERSARY SEASON
WITH VIBRANT WORLD PREMIERE MUSICAL
AS 8th ANNUAL NEW WORKS FESTIVAL CENTERPIECE
“TINYARD HILL”**

July 15-August 16, 2009

By Tommy Newman and Mark Allen

PALO ALTO (June 2, 2009) – **TheatreWorks**, the nationally acclaimed theatre of Silicon Valley, launches its 40th Anniversary season with a vibrant world premiere musical, **TINYARD HILL**, by **Tommy Newman** and 2009 Jonathan Larsen Award-winning composer **Mark Allen**. This sparkling, spirited new musical will act as the centerpiece of this summer’s **8th Annual New Works Festival (July 15-August 23)**, which will draw playwrights and composers from across the nation developing their latest works. Set in the sixties with a foot-stompin’ country-pop score, **TINYARD HILL** features cast including Broadway veteran **James Moye**, acclaimed musical actress **Allison Briner**, and regional favorites **Chris Critelli**, and **Melissa WolfKlain**, with TheatreWorks Founding Artistic Director **Robert Kelley** at the helm. **TINYARD HILL** plays **July 15 through August 16** (*press opening: July 18*) at TheatreWorks at Lucie Stern Theatre in Palo Alto. For tickets and information, the public may call **(650) 463-1960** or visit **theatreworks.org**.

The Vietnam War looming on the horizon seems far away from the small town of Tinyard Hill, Georgia, where young David Kingsley and his father run the local blacksmith shop. Desperate to bring their two hundred year old business, which has become little more than a tourist novelty, into modern times, David is filled with big dreams for the future. But when an out-of-this-world beauty and an out-of-the-blue draft notice arrive within days, his world is turned upside down. This feisty new musical is a winner of the Frederick Lowe Foundation Award and was a hit at the National Alliance of Musical Theatre’s Festival of New Musicals. **TINYARD HILL** recently received its first developmental production by Red Mountain Theatre in Birmingham, Alabama.

Tommy Newman, originally from Georgia, is a book writer, composer, lyricist and songwriter. He received a Lois Garren Award for composition, and was nationally recognized for his work at Troy University by the American College Theatre Festival at the Kennedy Center, receiving a summer

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THEATREWORKS PRESENTS "TINYARD HILL"

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fellowship at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center. He graduated from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts in 2006 with an M.F.A. in Musical Theatre Writing, where he was under the tutelage of renowned artists such as Jeanine Tesori, William Finn, Rachel Sheinkin, Michael John LaChiusa, Mel Marvin, Sarah Schlesinger, and many others. Newman has composed original scores for a number of regionally produced plays and films including the award winning short, *Dancing Ground*. In addition to **TINYARD HILL**, Newman has collaborated with composer Mark Allen on the new musical, *Band Geeks!*.

Mark Allen, also a Georgia native, is an award-winning composer of both film and musicals. He attended NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, where he first met and collaborated with Tommy Newman. A 2006 graduate, he holds an M.F.A. in Musical Theatre Writing. He is a recipient of the 2009 Jonathan Larsen Award for Emerging Composers, and won "Best Musical Score" for his orchestrations in the film *Viking Saga* at the "First Take Film Festival" in Augusta, Georgia. In addition to **TINYARD HILL**, Allen created the new musical *Band Geeks!* with Tommy Newman.

TheatreWorks has assembled an exceptional cast for **TINYARD HILL**, including **Allison Briner** in her TheatreWorks debut as May Bell Whitehead. She recently played Rosie in the national tour of *Mamma Mia!*. Other national tours include *Les Miserables* and *Titanic*. Off-Broadway credits include *Forbidden Broadway* and *Forbidden Hollywood*. She has performed regionally with Actor's Theater of Louisville, Denver Center, Papermill Playhouse, and Berkshire Theatre Festival. **Chris Critelli**, makes his TheatreWorks debut as the young and idealistic David Kingsley. Previous roles include "Perfect-Man" in the Off-Broadway production of *The New Hopeville Comics* at the American Theatre of Actors. Other credits include roles at Irish Classical Theatre, Artpark, and Shakespeare in Delaware Park. **James Moyer**, who makes his TheatreWorks debut as blacksmith Russell Kingsley, starred as Bob Wallace in the Broadway production of *White Christmas*, and was also seen in Broadway productions of *Urinetown* and *The Full Monty*. Moyer is currently performing Off-Broadway at the Lincoln Center in Susan Stroman's much anticipated *Happiness*, and has performed in national tours of *The Drowsy Chaperone* as Adolpho and *Little Shop of Horrors* as Orin. **Melissa WolfKlain** makes her mainstage debut at TheatreWorks as the beautiful Aileen Garrett. WolfKlain has appeared in previous TheatreWorks New Works Festival workshops including *Caraboo* and *Asphalt Beach*. She recently starred as Polly Baker in *Crazy for You* and

THEATREWORKS PRESENTS "TINYARD HILL"

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Millie Dilmount in *Thoroughly Modern Millie* at Broadway By the Bay, and other regional credits include roles at the Pantages Theatre and American Musical Theatre of San Jose.

TheatreWorks founding Artistic Director **Robert Kelley**, who helmed the company's recent acclaimed production of *Caroline, or Change* and multi record-breaking World Premiere musical *Emma*, directs **TINYARD HILL**. Kelley earned Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Awards for TheatreWorks' productions of *Caroline or Change*, *Ragtime*, *Rags*, *Another Midsummer Night*, the West Coast Premiere of *Jane Eyre*, and the Sondheim classics *Sunday in the Park with George*, *Pacific Overtures*, *Into the Woods*, and *Sweeney Todd*. Additionally, he is the recipient of Bay Area Drama-Logue Awards for his direction of *Pacific Overtures*, *Ah, Wilderness!*, and *Once in a Lifetime*, and Back Stage West Garland Awards for his direction of *Side Show* and *Sunday in the Park with George*. Since founding TheatreWorks in 1970, Kelley has directed over 150 productions for the company.

TINYARD HILL will act as the centerpiece for TheatreWorks' 8th Annual New Works Festival, which will also feature staged readings of three new plays including **THE SPARROW AND THE BIRDMAN**, a sensuous song-filled drama about the unforgettable Edith Piaf by Raquel Bitton and Chris Smith, **AUCTIONING THE AINSLEYS**, a humorous drama by Laura Schellhardt to be directed by recently appointed New Works Director Meredith McDonough, and **THE NORTH POOL**, a cat and mouse thriller from playwright Rajiv Joseph. The Festival will also include staged readings of three new musicals including **MAKEOVER**, the story of a feisty single mother who builds an empire from her gift for glamour, with book and lyrics by Darrah Cloud and music by Kim D. Sherman, **ERNEST SHACKLETON LOVES ME**, a fever dream musical with music by GrooveLily team Brendan Milburn and Valerie Vigoda, and book by Joe DiPietro, and **TALES FROM THE BAD YEARS**, a new musical for a generation of lost and adrift twenty-somethings, from Kait Kerrigan and Brian Lowdermilk.

The Festival will also present **Maureen McGovern**, the Grammy-winning Broadway and pop star, in a moving evening in song, *A Long and Winding Road: The Concert*, and Stanford-grad and nationally acclaimed singer/composer **Vienna Teng** in a concert of her greatest hits and brand new songs from her new musical. Additional events will include **The Big Four O: Hurwitt and Kelley**, a special conversation with *San Francisco Chronicle* theatre critic Rob Hurwitt and TheatreWorks'

THEATREWORKS PRESENTS “TINYARD HILL”

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Founding Artistic Director, Robert Kelley; **Young Playwrights Showcase**, a selection of the best from TheatreWorks’ Young Playwrights Initiative; **Bay Area Playwrights Take the Stage**, an intriguing and innovative evening of mini-readings hosted by Theatre Bay Area; and **Meet the Festival Artists**, where the Festival’s featured playwrights and composers will share their challenges and triumphs in creating new works.

Recently appointed New Works Director Meredith McDonough will oversee this summer’s New Works Festival. McDonough has been actively developing new works for the past ten years at theatres including Actors Theatre of Louisville, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Round House Theatre, The Public Theatre, LABrynth Theatre Company, Ars Nova, Women’s Project and Productions, New Georges, and the Drama League. She spent two years as the New Works Program Director at the National Alliance for Musical Theatre, and three seasons as a resident director at Actors Theatre of Louisville, famed for its annual Humana Festival of New American Plays. She has personally directed over twenty world premiere plays and musicals.

With approximately 9,000 subscribers and 100,000 patrons per year, **TheatreWorks** has captured a national reputation for artistic innovation and integrity, often presenting Bay Area theatregoers with their first look at acclaimed musicals, comedies, and dramas, directed by award-winning local and guest directors, and performed by professional actors cast from across the country.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: **TheatreWorks**, the nationally acclaimed theatre of Silicon Valley, launches its 40th Anniversary Season with a vibrant world premiere musical, **TINYARD HILL**, by **Tommy Newman** and **Mark Allen**. Set in the ’60s to a foot-stompin’ country-pop score, this feisty new musical is the tale of a handsome young blacksmith hammering out a living at the historic smithy his family has owned for generations. When an out-of-this-world beauty and an out-of-the-blue draft notice arrive within days, his life is turned upside down. **TheatreWorks** Founding Artistic Director **Robert Kelley** will direct this tale of romance and rebellion, which will act as the centerpiece of this summer’s New Works Festival, drawing playwrights and composers from across the nation.

WHEN: Previews: July 15, 16, 17
Press Opening: **Saturday, July 18**
Closes: Sunday, August 16

SHOWS: Previews: **8pm**

THEATREWORKS PRESENTS "TINYARD HILL"

5-5-5-5-5

Tuesdays and Wednesdays: **7:30pm**

Thursdays and Fridays: **8pm**

Saturdays: **2pm, 8pm**

Sundays: **2pm, 7pm**

Pre-show "How Theatre Works" discussion July 16 at 6:30pm, featuring creators Tommy Newman and Mark Allen in a lively discussion of this World Premiere musical; Post-show Discussion Wednesdays with cast and artistic staff July 22, 29, and August 12; "Visual Voice" audio-described performances are available August 7 and 8 at 8pm, and August 16 at 2pm.

WHERE: TheatreWorks at Lucie Stern Theatre
1305 Middlefield Rd.

TICKETS: \$29 (student)-\$67; savings available for students, educators, seniors, and members. A \$2 convenience fee will be assessed for online and telephone orders. For tickets, information, and subscription information, the public may call **(650) 463-1960** or visit **theatreworks.org**.

Media Sponsor for the TheatreWorks 2009-10 Season is The Mercury News

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